

They are raising the next generation...

*Some might be reading their textbook with one hand,
while rocking a baby in the other arm.
Others might be taking classes here alongside their sons or daughters.*

Listening to Students Who Are Parents

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Listening to Student Parents...

“Difficult. I am a single mother and currently pregnant. I am attending school to ensure a better future for my children but the resources seem limited to certain groups.

I work full time, a mother and student, all while attending school on a limited budget and with scarce time.

Professors have been helpful at times with understanding my condition(s).”

—single mother

“I fit in, feel accepted.”

—Female, Filipina/Mexican, 24, Straight, Married, Mother

“Supporting a family and going to school full time is an extraordinary challenge. I have no free time after I add in my homework. Considering some out of class activities is also often out of the questions and has an impact on my class choices.

I’ve managed to make a lot of progress despite everything and my department...has been very helpful.

CSUS has a great day care/preschool program that my daughter attends. It is super helpful to my wife and I.”

—31 yr old, full time working, full time student and parent

“Challenging with workload to keep up with increased tuition.”

—Single Parent

“It is very difficult balancing home life with school life.

I like that it has a daycare.”

—migrant student, first year, 19, mother

“My demographic faces many challenges, but also, it has advantages. Challenges: Relating to most college-aged students who are not parents.”

—Vet, Parent, Male, Native American, Older, Straight (Hetero)

“I think it is good to be the first student from my family to come to college and to be able to go to a university and keep my goals it feels great and so much accomplished.

I would like to share how everybody is caring and really want us to keep pushing.”

—I am a black African American student that is 19 years old and I am also a young mother and I am a first year student here at sac state and is enrolled in EOP program here on sac state campus.

“Well I have a hard time taking day class because there is no accessible daycare. I also feel out of place when I come to campus during the day and it’s sorority recruiting week. The groups/clubs available are for young people that I could not relate to. Sometimes it makes me feel uncomfortable.

I love the night classes and would like to see upper division courses offered at night.

Daycare has not worked. I am competing w/too many people.”

—Hmong (35 years old)

“I am having a positive experience at CSUS.”

—white, married, mother & is 39 years old

“Being so busy with not only school but personal life makes it a challenge but one I know I can reach my goals in.

I like the fact that Sac State offers so much.... I love the atmosphere. It makes you want to come outside and do your work. I feel safe and healthy at Sac State.”

—I am a returning student of age 20. I am married and have a child on the way. I am a hard working student who likes challenges. Getting my degree is my priority right now

“I feel like I’m the oldest person in all three of my classes. I feel like I take all my time here at school more seriously than others. Hopefully next semester will be different.”

—28, Mom, transfer student

“43, 18 units, 4 kids, divorced, poor...it’s awesome! Ha-Ha – I’ve overcome a lot and worked my butt off and I’m proud of it.”

—White Female 43 Hetro Return Stud. Parent

“I love Blackboard and being able to take on-line exams/quizzes. It really helps me organize my time around my kids’ schedules.”

—Returning to School

“There aren’t many resources that are geared toward Student/Parents.”

—Black Female (who is a parent) 28

“It is not that great. I really want to spend more time with my son.

I would like to say that students should not pass judgement of a student (23 yrs old) having a kid (1 ½ yr old).”

—a 23 year old Dad.

“Somewhat challenging, when creating a schedule that allows me to obtain my degree while adhering to my duties.

The campus is very welcoming and the teachers/staff are very supportive.”

—Transfer/Parent/Full-time employee

“In some of my GE classes I felt like the ‘room mother’ or ‘troop leader’ when it came to group projects. It happens less often in higher level courses, but it still happens.”

—junior, mother of three

“It can be very challenging pregnant & a student because of the high levels of stress school brings. So many exams and assignments due on the same day that getting them done on short notice or making sure you keep the info straight in your mind is hard.

Teachers have been nice for the most part about having to miss a class due to Dr.s apts.”

—Female, 27 year old, pregnant, transfer commuter.

“It is incredibly hard to be a student and a parent of a newborn. I miss sleep.”

—25

“Busy. School is enjoyable for me. The biggest obstacle is time. I’m fortunate in that I have a pretty great life.”

—married, white, male, 38, father of two, works full-time

“I enjoy most of my studies.

When I tell my kids to do their homework they like to tell me to do mine. But I wait until they go to bed to get most of it done.”

—third year, married, 2 children

“It’s pretty difficult trying to balance school, mother of 3 and homework.

When I first started here, I kinda felt that the advisors in (a) Depart didn’t give such positive help....

Everyone is treated equal/fairly regardless of age, gender & race.

I wish I was aware or knew of places to get help on certain classes. Maybe if the teacher sees you struggle they can recommend/direct you where you can get help.”

—39 year old woman

“Studying takes time away from my children, but I know it is the right thing to do for my family in the long run.”

—parent, thirties, commuter

“I love Sac State.... (I like) everything—tutors, counselors, teachers, the WELL.

Having teachers that aren’t understanding when things come up between my being a single mom and getting overwhelmed with life. A little understanding can go a long way.”

—Bisexual, a Christian & a single mom – 32 yo

“Even though it is a challenge home with the kids at this age, the support that I get from SSWD, the support that I get from my professors, it makes it less difficult. It makes it easier on you.

I’ve had a good experience so far. Everything from professors to the resources, information, e-mails they send, help that they give with any subject you have.”

—37, 3 children, social work major

“Coming back to school is a privilege and a challenge. Returning to school has allowed me to pursue a degree and further my education. The challenging aspect is I work full time, which don’t allow for enough study time.

I love the idea that there are options for students to take classes at night and online while working full time.”

—Returning to School. Parent, Male

“I feel like, while I am able take good classes and receive good education here, there is a culture I can’t tap into. It is probably because I don’t have time for many extra-curricular activities. I would like to have the opportunity to interact with more people.

I love the classes and my professors. They are so knowledgeable and passionate about their subjects.”

—a white single mother of 27 years

“For myself, I am a transfer student with 91+ units, and so sometimes its hard to focus because I feel like I have been in school so long. Its harder when it comes to being a mother because my schedule revolves around two schedules.

I like the fact that there is a daycare/school for students with kids, because it takes some pressure off and paying more attention in class rather than worrying about daycare and costs.”

—24, caucasian, female, mother, transfer

“I really enjoy Sac State. The children’s center has given me access to free childcare which is life changing!

Other CSU’s have affordable family housing which would be nice”

—hispanic, female, 22, transfer student, parent

“As a student it’s been very challenging going to school, working, and maintaining a family. I feel as if the campus & staff don’t understand students have a life outside of school. I understand school is not easy, but I feel like some staff doesn’t care about the students outside school. A simple example would be a few times being just a few minutes late due to daycare problems and I tried working with the professor and they seem to not want to work w/me.

When it comes to planning classes that’s what worked for me and I like how helpful the academic center has been.”

—a female, 23, parent.

“Finding the right schedule to accommodate my son’s needs, being able to pick him up from school, finding the right study schedule is different as well. Being able to fit work in the mix as well. There are a lot of good resources that CSUS provides to assist me.”

—a single parent (Veteran Success Center)

“challenging yet exciting”

—Hispanic, 28, single parent, fulltime work

“Difficult and challenging at times, but I always take from all of my experiences here at Sac State. I have learned a lot and I’m sure all of the skills I have acquired here I will use in my life.”

—25 years old and African American parent.

“The relationship with the teachers is great and they’re very helpful and can answer questions or at least send you to the person who would know the information you are looking for.

(I like) Getting classes and talking to counselors and the organization of classes with everything from the syllabus to note-taking.”

—African American, 28, Father, SCUSD Employee

“There are many clubs and organizations at Sacramento State who allow students such as myself to get involved.”

—a 19 year old Mexican-American Mother

“Being a parent, it’s so comfortable to have my child at the daycare here at Sac State. As well, professors understand our absences.”

—Parent, White, 24, Female

“I appreciate the help I get through financial aid. But with the amount I still have to work I have trouble finding time to study like I would like to do. There are many helpful services that I appreciate on campus.

I like the atmosphere on campus. I’d like my son to go here when he is ready to go to a university.”

—33-year-old, white, male, first semester, transfer student, father, full-time employee.

Student Parents

Over a quarter of college students nationwide (25.9%) are raising dependent children, totaling 4.8 million. At four-year institutions across the country, such as Sacramento State, student parents make up 13% of the student body.

Most are women (71% of all student parents), with 3,422,270 student mothers compared to 1,400,478 student fathers. Many are doing it alone: Single mothers make up 43% of all student parents and single fathers 11%.

The Obstacles They Face

Being a parent puts the student at risk in college completion, and being a single parent even more so.

Student parents have considerable demands on their time for parenting and providing for their families. They are more likely than other students without children to work full-time: 68% of married parents and 56% of single parents who are students report that they spend 30 hours a week or more caring for their children, with single parents likely spending even more time.

Student parents are more likely to have low incomes than students without children, and for single parent students, 88% fall at or below 200% of the federal poverty level.

Student parents are also often first generation college students, without the benefit of their own parents to provide pivotal guidance or role models for making it through college. They are often underrepresented minorities in higher education, as well, with significant sociocultural challenges to achieving their college education.

What's at Stake

Students with children are less likely to graduate. Only 26% of student parents at 4-year colleges achieve their degree in six years, as compared to 67% of students without children. Single parents, in particular, are at risk: 42% of single parent students—almost half—say it is likely or very likely that they will have to withdraw from school due to their child care responsibilities.

There is so much at stake. A college education has significant benefits for the student parent, for the children they love, and for our nation. A college degree better positions the student to get a good job in a competitive labor market and support their family. Greater parental educational attainment also impacts positively a child's educational development in school in such areas as language skill, reading, and math—and the likelihood of going to and graduating from college themselves. These are dividends that likely carry forward in their future generations, as well. All of this helps to grow and strengthen our country's workforce, and better position our nation in the world economy.

(Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research, "Prepping Colleges for Parents: Strategies for Supporting Student Parent Success in Postsecondary Education," 2015, found at: iwpr.org/publications/pubs/prepping-colleges-for-parents-strategies-for-supporting-student-parent-success-in-postsecondary-education

and Institute for Women's Policy Research, "Fact Sheet," 2014, found at: iwpr.org/publications/pubs/4.8-million-college-students-are-raising-children)

What We Can Do

Student parents face multiple and significant responsibilities, as well as risk-factors to staying and succeeding in college, but there are things that we can do to make their educational journey easier.

Talk

Communication with faculty and staff can be helpful to all students for many reasons, but for student parents there may be even more need.

One-on-one connections made with you can help the student parent to feel a greater sense of belonging in academia, a place without children and where the majority of students are not parents. Some student parents may also appreciate learning more about the class or field of study in relation to their work or career goals, and others may tell you just how much they appreciate “adult conversation” that they don’t get too much of when raising young kids. Student parents may also find this type of communication conducive to forging or fostering role identities in addition to that of parent.

Student parents don’t always want to or have time to chat. For those who do, though, offering that invitation to come see you in office hours or give you a call, or welcoming conversation out on campus, in office hallways, and before or after class, can be just what they needed.

Encouragement

Students usually know that college is important to their future, but they don’t always realize just how much in concrete terms. Telling them how much their education is worth can be a huge source of motivation, especially when the many responsibilities of the student parent in the here-and-now can obscure the longer-term picture.

A college education increases one’s career options and life-time financial stability. Many positions these days require a college degree to even be permitted an interview or promotion at work. Those who attain a Bachelor’s degree earn over four hundred dollars per week more than those without college degrees and their chances of unemployment are cut almost in half when compared to those with a high school diploma, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (“Earnings and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment 2015”). This totals about a million dollars more earned in one’s lifetime than those with only the high school degree, according to National Center for Education Statistics.

Graduating from college creates a brighter future for the student parent’s family in other ways, too. The attainment of a college degree increases their children’s academic skills and probability of attending college themselves someday, which, in turn, raises the likelihood of college graduation for their grandchildren and great-grandchildren—all a wonderful legacy to build.

Support

Because they are parents, the likelihood is that their focus all goes to the children they love, leaving little time or attention to themselves. They put their children first, which means that self-care and support can fall to the wayside, precisely when they might need it most, given the demands of school, family, and likely work.

Support comes in many forms, but may simply be empathy given to a student parent for all of the many responsibilities juggled, or respect shown for accomplishments in class or on campus that are especially hard-won, given the claims of family on time and energy. Then, too, the common ground shared between all parents, student and campus employee, is a beautiful thing, offering a significant way to relate, spark conversation, and help the student to feel more fully understood. Words of encouragement can also mean so much to a tired or overwhelmed student parent struggling with school and family pressures.

We can also direct students to further support for student parents on campus. The Parents and Families Program offers opportunities for students who are parents to come together to share advice, experiences, and create a community of students who understand what it's like to balance school, work, and family responsibilities. Further information may be found at:

csus.edu/student/parents/Student%20Parents

Reassurance

Some students may worry about absences or other concerns related to their pregnancy or parenting adversely affecting their educational goals and coursework, and not realize they have rights accorded to them by Title IX in postsecondary institutions. Understanding that there are legal protections in place may give them peace of mind. As we know from campus training, these include the following:

- Absences due to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions must be excused by faculty, and the student given the opportunity to make up tests and assignments in a reasonable amount of time and recoup any participation points or other benefits lost due to that absence.
- Pregnancy, childbirth, and related conditions must be treated in the same manner and under the same policies as any other temporary disability, including the same accommodations and support services that are available to other students with similar medical needs.
- A student who is pregnant cannot be excluded from the opportunities given to any other student, including enrolling or staying in a class, pursuing a major, doing an internship, and more.

The above and further information is provided by the Office of Human Resources, at the “Pregnant and Parenting Student Rights” webpage at:

csus.edu/hr/departments/equal-opportunity/pregnant%20and%20parenting%20student%20rights

Understanding

No matter how carefully considered and scheduled, childcare arrangements can still fall through. Doctor's appointments, school meetings, and other events in relation to children will sometimes compete with class times. Injuries and illness will occur, and when the choice comes down to a sick child or class attendance and homework, the former will almost always win.

Faculty can help by providing clear options for how to get assignments turned in on time for the student who can't make it to campus on the due date, or any policies for making up tests or turning in coursework late.

Assistance

Student parents usually have much greater obligations than the average student in terms of school, family, and quite likely work, and this often puts real strain on the student. Some may also feel guilt when their studies compete with time spent with their children. Not being home to tuck a child into bed when you're in night class or having to do homework rather than spend quality time with the kids you love can be tough.

We might not always fully understand how much providing direction in campus life, guidance on educational path, or help with coursework can be just what the busy student parent needs, helping to save valuable time or lessen some of the load or stress. A few minutes helping the student to get the basics of APA format or pointers for how to study most effectively for your course test, for example, not only frees up a little time to spend with family, but also may be a huge source of support and assistance on the path to their college degree.

Referral to campus resources may also be appreciated and, in the pages to follow, you will find a list of some of the key campus resources for student parents.

(With appreciation to the Parents and Families Program,
for the work being done for student parents attending Sacramento State,
as well as for parents with children who are students here,
and to Haley Myers, Director, Parents & Families Program, Student Affairs, for assistance with this information.)

Campus Resources

Parents and Families Program for “Student-Parents”—

Offers opportunities for students who are parents to come together to share advice, experiences, and create a community of students who understand what it’s like to balance school, work, and family responsibilities.

Location: Lassen Hall 2205-O

Phone: (916) 278-4353

Website: csus.edu/student/parents/student-parents

Website for Sac State Student-Parent Community:

facebook.com/SacStateSpc?fref=ts#https://www.facebook.com/SacStateSpc?fref=ts

Mother’s Room—

Offers a private space where lactating mothers are welcome to pump or nurse in a room equipped with a sink, changing table, seating, and electrical outlets. Nursing mothers with photo ID may check out a key at the University Union Information Desk on the first floor and then proceed to the room on the third floor. The website also lists the locations of other Lactation Rooms throughout campus.

Location: University Union, First Floor then Third Floor Phone: (916) 278-6997

Website: theuniversityunion.com/student-resources/mothers-room

Children’s Center—

Offers day care services for children (ages six months through kindergarten) of Sacramento State students and employees. Fees are based on hourly and full day rates, and students in need may apply for childcare financial assistance if they meet income eligibility guidelines.

Location: State University Drive East

Phone: (916) 278-6216

Website: asi.csus.edu/programs/childrens-center

Office of Human Resources “Pregnant and Parenting Student Rights” Website—

Provides the answers to frequently asked questions from students in postsecondary institutions regarding their Title IX rights in higher education and what to do if they feel their rights are being violated.

Website: csus.edu/hr/departments/equal-opportunity/pregnant%20and%20parenting%20student%20rights

Academic Resources Online—

While students may get help from any of the many academic support services offices, sometimes student parents can’t make it on to campus. Online academic support options include:

Smarthinking—

Provides online tutoring that enables students to get the help they need 24-hours a day, seven days a week, in areas such as: writing, reading, mathematics, science, business, Spanish, nursing and allied health, and computers and technology. Students can chat with a live tutor, send a question to tutors, have their writing reviewed, and more.

Website: csus.edu/degreesproject/smarthinking

University Library—

In addition to the numerous online campus data bases for research, students with questions may call, e-mail, or “chat” with a librarian 24/7, or come in.

Location: South End of Campus Near Quad

Phone: (916) 278-5679

Website: library.csus.edu

Other Campus Resources—

While students generally know they may drop in, call, or e-mail campus offices, many may not realize that the majority of campus resources offer extensive information on their webpages. For example:

Academic Advising Center—

In addition to providing general education advising on a drop-in basis for first year students, second year students, transfer students, and students who are undeclared, the Center offers extensive information on the website, answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs), and videos to learn about various aspects of Sacramento State life, including: “Academic Requirements,” “Searching for GE at Sac State,” “Crashing Classes,” and “Navigating Your Student Center.”

Location: Lassen Hall 1013

Phone: (916) 278-1000

Website: csus.edu/acad

Student Service Center—

In addition to offering one-stop help toward college success and all matters academic to students who come by or call, the website offers numerous links to information regarding financial aid, registration, records, fees, and holds. The website also has a “Forms” page where students can find the many key campus documents they need and information on when and how to use them.

Location: Lassen Hall Main Lobby

Phone: (916) 278-1000

Website: csus.edu/ssc

IRT Service Desk—

In addition to helping students with any tech-related questions they might have, including inquiries regarding MySacState account, SacCT, wireless service, Sac State mobile, accessibility, and so much more, the IRT Service Desk website also offers numerous links for frequently asked questions (FAQS) and software and training.

Location: Academic Information Resource Center 2005

Phone: (916) 278-7337

Website: csus.edu/irt/ServiceDesk

Academic Technology Center (ATC)—

In addition to helping students in person at the Center to learn the technology needed to complete their coursework, students may receive assistance online to learn course-related software and programs such as Microsoft Office Word, Excel, PowerPoint, SacCT, and SPSS.

Location: Academic Information Resource Center 2004

Phone: (916) 278-7337

Website: csus.edu/atc

Career Center—

In addition to offering career counseling on a drop-in basis for students, the Career Center also offers a “Resources” website which has links to numerous hand-outs on job search and internships, resume and cover letter writing, interviewing and networking, career fairs, and other documents on job search strategies and resources, as well as the online College to Career Readiness Program and Career to Career Connections Online Job Board.

Location: Lassen Hall 1013

Phone: (916) 278-6231

Website: csus.edu/careercenter

And, of course, students may always use the online KEYS to Degree Toolbox:

KEYS to Degrees Toolbox (Kit to Empower Your Success)—

Helps students to better navigate through college life online, with features such as Process to Degree, Financial Aid Meter, Smart Planner, Academic Requirements Report, Transfer Credit Report, Advising Summary, and more.

Website: csus.edu/irt/support/keys